



Approved: June 22, 2020

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL
MAY 28, 2020
5:30 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Mayor Grant called to order the Special City Council meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Note: On March 20th, the Mayor signed a determination allowing Councilmembers to participate in City Council meetings via telephone pursuant to State Statute 13D.021

Present via Telephone: Mayor David Grant; Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Fran Holmes, Dave McClung and Steve Scott

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault; Public Works Director/City Engineer Todd Blomstrom; Recreation Programmer Joe Vaughan; and City Clerk Julie Hanson; **via telephone:** Finance Director Gayle Bauman and Community Development Manager/City Planner Mike Mroska

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Flexibility for Local Businesses During Local Emergency for COVID-19

City Administrator Perrault stated that at a previous meeting, the City Council requested staff contact each of the on-sale liquor license holders to make them aware of the partial refund of their liquor license fees as was previously approved by the City Council. He stated that he had contacted these businesses and also explained the temporary flexibility option so that those interested could make application to the city. He indicated that he was not able to reach all of the on-sale liquor license holders directly but did in turn leave a voicemail message. He also followed up by sending an email to the on-sale liquor licensees.

City Administrator Perrault said that he reached out to John Connolly of the Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce and Mr. Connolly was supportive of assisting the city with outreach. Methods included the Chamber's normal means of outreach that included a Facebook live check-in every Friday as well as twice weekly outreach notifications for the member businesses. He

noted the Chamber's local business meetings were set to resume in mid-June. He also stated that this information had also been included on the city's website and social media outlets.

Councilmember Holmes asked if any applications for business flexibility had been received.

City Administrator Perrault stated that Flaherty's and the Big 10 had expressed interest in making application for flexibility but to date the city had not received any formal applications.

Councilmember Holden asked how chain restaurants such as McDonald's or Arby's would know about the flexibility option as they may not be members of the Chamber. She noted that the city did not have that many restaurants and suggested staff call the businesses.

Mayor Grant stated that staff could call the local businesses.

Councilmember McClung noted that many of the local businesses subscribe to the city's website notifications and social media, and so many may be aware, but agreed it would be good to communicate to all businesses.

Councilmember Scott asked about the process and length of time to approve the flexibility applications.

City Administrator Perrault stated all applications would be expedited, noting the goal was to turn the applications around within one or two days. He said the applications would be forwarded to the appropriate staff members and the Fire Department, but that he himself would be responsible for final approval.

A discussion ensued regarding staff contacting local businesses and how current businesses could potentially function within the flexibility option.

The Council agreed that staff should make phone calls to affected businesses in the city and follow up with an email to ensure all have received this information.

B. COVID-19 and Operational Considerations

City Administrator Perrault stated that while the City Council could formally vote, staff was looking for general direction regarding ongoing City Hall operations in light of the fact that the Governor had not provided updated guidance since May 20. He stated that as of May 22, 2020, Little Canada's City Hall would be reopening the following week, that New Brighton and Mounds View City Halls remained closed for the foreseeable future and that the Roseville City Hall would likely be closed for the next few weeks as well.

City Administrator Perrault noted that staff had been working remotely at least half of the time. He also said that following a discussion with each staff member and having received no concerns, he anticipated partial staff returning to working in the office on a more consistent basis beginning June 1.

City Administrator Perrault stated that he had drafted a schedule that staff was comfortable with and that appropriate social distancing would continue. He noted that there are generally 17 total employees at City Hall. He asked for further Council direction regarding whether or not to reopen City Hall either in a reduced or full capacity.

Councilmember Holden asked for clarification as to why there is the need to increase staffing in the office.

City Administrator Perrault stated that most staff indicated they are willing and ready to come in to the office as they feel they can be more productive. He noted that working remotely presents challenges as processes for certain functions that are more complex may require manual work. He noted that no complaints have been received about staff not completing work and that building permits have continued as normal. He concluded that it is not that work is not being completed but rather that it is more complicated for staff to perform some processes remotely.

Councilmember Holden asked how many days staff has to issue a permit, noting the permit most likely does not have to be issued the same day.

City Administrator Perrault stated that there is a customer service expectation, especially if a permit application is submitted on a Friday for work to be completed on the weekend.

Councilmember Holmes stated she would like clarification regarding the Governor's stay safe order for critical businesses. She noted the June 1 order says that people must continue to telework if they can.

City Administrator Perrault confirmed that the city is considered an essential service. He said that he is attempting to find middle ground regarding what other cities are doing as some have never closed their doors to the public and others are planning to stay closed until August or September.

Councilmember Holmes stated she prefers to follow the Governor's order and to have staff continue to work remotely as much as possible.

Councilmember Scott said he would be inclined to open City Hall on a limited basis but did not want to force anyone to come in to work if they did not feel safe. He wanted to ensure the public's perception is that the city wants to accommodate their needs. He stated he understands that not all staff have a public facing role but would like to see City Hall open with limited staffing that is left up to the discretion of the City Administrator.

Mayor Grant expressed concern over reopening the doors to the public at this time. He suggested keeping staffing under 10 but preferably at 8 total in the office at a time, that staff not work within the same room and for those that do not have an office but instead a cube, there be only one person there at a time.

Councilmember McClung stated he works for a State agency and that the entire agency is considered essential, noting they are to telework through the end of the calendar year. He agreed that the expectation per the Governor's order is that when work can be done from home it is to be

done from home. He said he is not supportive of reopening to customer facing at City Hall at this time. He stated that if staff needs flexibility in order to accomplish their jobs by doing a combination of teleworking and working in the office they should work with the City Administrator, but that staffing in the office should be kept to a minimum.

A discussion ensued regarding the number, frequency, and logistics of current staffing levels at City Hall.

Mayor Grant stated that the City Administrator has been hired to manage staff and can make the call on a day to day basis.

Councilmember Holden suggested that since some staff were already working in the office on a limited basis that staffing levels do not change. She also asked if masks are required.

City Administrator Perrault stated that staff had been directed to socially distance and if they are not able to do so, they should then wear a mask. He confirmed that sanitizer was readily available and if a staff member does not have a mask but would like one, that one would be made available to them. He stated that the CDC guidelines are being followed.

Councilmember Holmes suggested there be no more than 8 people total in the building.

Councilmember Scott stated that he trusts the City Administrator to run the city in a safe and responsible manner.

Councilmember McClung said it also was his preference to have as few people in the office as necessary and that staff should plan their schedules accordingly regarding work that could be done from home versus in the office.

Councilmembers Holmes and Holden requested better communication between the City Administrator and the City Council regarding staff levels going forward, and that there be no change to the staff levels at this time.

City Administrator Perrault stated that staffing levels had not changed from what was presented to the City Council at previous work session; rather he was proposing a more consistent plan effective June 1. He noted the Council's current direction to dial back from the proposed plan, confirming he would do so and communicate staffing schedules going forward.

Mayor Grant acknowledged that schedules could change from time to time based on need and requested the changes be communicated as best as they could.

City Administrator Perrault asked the City Council for guidance regarding park shelter rentals and field rentals for youth sports. He stated that the City would lose approximately \$4,000 in revenue this season by not allowing rentals.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom stated staff had received requests to utilize fields from NSSA Soccer and Shoreview Area Youth Baseball. He noted staff was not making a recommendation but rather looking for Council direction for this item.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom indicated that the fields would be used for practices only at this time, not games, and that should games be suggested, that would warrant another discussion by the City Council.

Councilmember Holmes stated the Governor's guidance allows practices and non-contact scrimmages and she was in favor of allowing the leagues to use the fields provided they followed the State and League of Minnesota Cities' guidelines. She noted the city cannot monitor the sites, could remove the right to use the fields, and stated the city should not be liable for use of the fields.

Councilmember Holden stated she agreed with **Councilmember Holmes**.

Councilmember McClung indicated he agreed with allowing use of the fields but noted it would be at the users' own risk as the city could not be responsible for disinfecting the site and cannot provide enforcement.

Councilmember Scott stated he was fine with youth groups using the fields for practices.

The City Council was in agreement to allow field use, providing the groups are in conformance with State guidelines.

City Administrator Perrault asked for the City Council's direction regarding park shelter rentals. He noted the Governor's order did not provide guidance for this particular situation.

A discussion ensued regarding park shelter rentals.

Councilmember Holden asked what the process would to reserve a park shelter in the future, for example in September.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom stated that staff had been taking names and had created a schedule for future reservation dates. He said that staff had been making it very clear to customers that there is no guarantee that the City will provide park rentals. He also stated no deposits were being accepted at this time.

Mayor Grant commented that if a group showed up at the park currently with no reservation, the city was not policing this. He said it appears the general consensus was the city would not allow park shelter rentals at this time but would take names if the situation were to change in the future, but there are no guarantees.

The City Council agreed with this guidance.

City Administrator Perrault noted there were two additional COVID-19 related topics that staff would like City Council direction for. He said the Governor's order did not provide specific guidance for garage sales and solicitors. He stated that while no inquiries had been received regarding garage sales to date, staff expected requests may begin to come in in the near future.

After a short discussion, the City Council agreed that garage sales should be suspended at this time.

Councilmember Scott asked how many solicitor's permits the city issues typically in a season.

City Administrator Perrault stated that the actual number of solicitor's permits is relatively small with just 5 permits having been issued in 2019. He noted fees are \$158 per person for a background check and then a \$105 per month license fee for the business itself. He stated that last year the city collected revenue totaling approximately \$4,500. He said that currently there was one company's request pending for 13 potential door-to-door solicitors.

A discussion ensued and the City Council agreed to suspend solicitor's permits at this time, noting this information should be relayed to the public on the City's website.

2. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURN

MOTION: Mayor Grant moved and Councilmember Holden seconded a motion to adjourn. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Mayor Grant adjourned the Special City Council meeting at 6:47 p.m.



Julie Hanson
City Clerk



David Grant
Mayor